

I commend President Obama for his recent decision to direct the U.S. Justice Department to stop defending the 1996 *Defense of Marriage Act* (DOMA), citing it as unconstitutional. This discriminatory law denies same-sex couples the over 1,300 critical rights, benefits, and protections afforded to legally-married heterosexual couples. I have long asserted that DOMA is not only unconstitutional, but unconscionable, and illogical. The President's decision represents an important step in the right direction – towards true equality for all – however, our work is far from over.

Until DOMA is finally repealed by Congress or overturned by the Supreme Court, gay and lesbian Americans will not be treated equally under the law, and this is truly disgraceful. That is why, in the 111<sup>th</sup> Congress, I was a proud original co-sponsor of the *Respect for Marriage Act* introduced by Congressman Jerrold Nadler of New York, which would repeal DOMA and ensure that all married couples are treated equally under federal law. It is also important to note that the

*Respect for Marriage Act*

only applies to couples whose marriages were performed legally. This underscores the sad reality that gay and lesbian Americans are still essentially second-class citizens, with different rights depending on the state that they live in.

It is my sincere hope that our nation as a whole will soon recognize the equal rights of all Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation, and reflect this in our laws. I will continue to support efforts to repeal DOMA and other discriminatory measures to ensure that all Americans are afforded the legal rights, benefits, and protections that they equally deserve.